

## Philippians 3: 1-11

Brief notes of an address on Philippians 3: 1-11.

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(B.T. Vol. N7, p. 373-374.)

The central point of the preceding chapter is the life of the Lord on earth, in His obedience of love, humbling Himself — the pattern for us. As sinners we cannot humble ourselves, we are as low as we can be; but when grace has exalted us to be children of God, then we are called to follow Him. We must be above our duty before we can accomplish it. Phil. 3, on the contrary, looks at the Lord in glory as the Object to counteract the influences of flesh in its religious aspect. But we must know the Lord in grace before we can go on in His power. The apostle started with the glory. It was there, and there alone, that he saw the Lord — not with his natural eyes, for he had fallen with his face to the ground, but-by the manifestation of the Spirit. Yet he really saw the Lord, and really heard the words of His mouth. It is thus with every converted soul. The miraculous circumstances may be lacking, but miracles never yet saved any one. There must be the new birth — "born of water and Spirit," the Spirit's action by the word of God — before there can be entrance into the kingdom of God.

Even with himself, lest he should be exalted above measure, he was only permitted to give his earliest testimony for a very short time, and then he is sent into Arabia to learn the grace of the Lord.

The too frequent plunging into service before learning the Lord's mind, as shown in Phil. 2, is what the Spirit warns against here, for it is sure to lead to the activity of the flesh and not of the Spirit. "Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord." This cuts at the root of the whole matter. It is not, Run into service in order to get joy, but, "rejoice in the Lord." And unless there is joy in Him, service is most dangerous. "To write the same things to you to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe." He had already at the beginning said much about "rejoicing"; he does so again at the end. But the apostle did not mind repeating his words to impress them the more upon them.

"Beware of dogs." It is not likely that he would speak of the sheep thus, but the vigilant eye of this under-shepherd had detected those creeping in whose worldly-mindedness made it too evident that they were "enemies of the cross of Christ," although they might be extremely zealous of religion. "Beware of evil workers, beware of the concision" — a play upon the word "circumcision." We know how the idolatrous priests cut themselves with knives and lances (1 Kings 18: 28), and this may refer to that practice. It is astonishing how far the flesh may go in its religious energy, entirely opposed to the mind of God.

"For we are the circumcision" — himself and the Philippians. He purposely brings in these Gentile believers to show how completely this is outside ordinances — "Who worship by God's Spirit." Nothing hinders the Spirit's action so much as the flesh-mixing up the church and the world. "And rejoice in Christ Jesus" — again he brings this in — "and have no confidence in the flesh." Then he speaks of himself, what the religious flesh of Saul of Tarsus was — "but what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ." Very valuable they had appeared until that sight of the glory of Christ. "And I count all things but loss," not merely "counted"! Many begin well, who after a time go back. Paul, near the end of his course, still counted "all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." All this is in the singular number. When he speaks of general blessings he links others with himself. Not so in this his personal experience.

"That I may win Christ." Was he not already a believer? Yes, but he looks on to the time when he

should be with Him, and enjoy His presence in glory with Him. "Not having my own righteousness," etc. A strange expression from one who, "touching the righteousness of the law was blameless." But this was of his own working out. All he wanted now was Christ. "The power of his resurrection." The religion of today starts with the Incarnation: Paul with His death, with the resurrection glory of the One who has passed out of this scene altogether. " If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection from the dead." He looked through the long vista to the time when he should be in his glorified body with Him — that is what he means by "winning" Christ.

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(B.T. Vol. N8, p. 170.)

O my brother, be it ours to fill the little while separate from the world, and above fleshly ease in the devoted service of Christ. Nothing so good and happy now, and nothing so appreciated on high and through all eternity, unless it be the communion with Himself and the worship which accompany it.

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